## How's your system running?
Agencies track data center applications over the web

State agencies can soon track the operating status of computer applications and systems at the state's data center simply by visiting a new Web site.

GTA recently made the site available to several state agencies. It enables them to check the current performance of systems around the clock and view reports of past performance for time periods they specify. The site will be available to all agencies May 1.

"The site delivers metrics so agencies can see how applications and systems are doing," said David Duncan, who manages GTA's Monitoring Center. "It's an important tool to help us manage the service we provide."
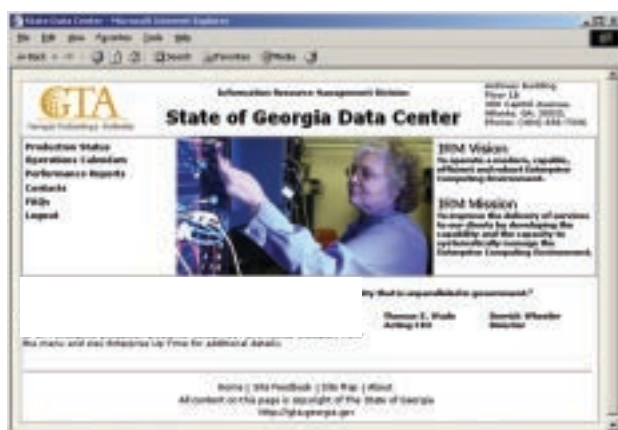
The new data center Web site makes it possible for agencies to track the current performance of applications and systems around the clock.

The monitoring center was established last year to identify potential data processing problems as they emerge so technicians can intervene before agencies experience slowdowns or service interruptions.

The data center's new Web site extends some of the monitoring center's capabilities to agencies whose computer applications are supported by GTA. In the same way a car's dashboard provides the driver with gauges to quickly and easily see how the engine is running, an application status "dashboard" uses elements like green, yellow and red lights to indicate how particular systems are running. Technicians responsible for monitoring the systems can add their own detailed notes about operations.

Some performance reports use bar charts to indicate the amount of time applications have been running without interruption. Agencies can view an "Enterprise Up Time" bar chart to find out if service interruptions occurred in a specified time period, and detailed notes describe what caused the interruptions and how long they lasted.

The site also includes calendars indicating when specific tasks, such as systems maintenance and large print jobs, will take place. Production information helps agencies plan their work so they can maintain operating efficiency.

Agencies can e-mail GTA from the site to ask questions or provide comments.

The Web site is in keeping with the data center's guiding principles, which call for

- notifying customer agencies immediately about operating problems and keeping them informed during the resolution period;
- minimizing service disruptions by carefully scheduling maintenance or upgrades;
- testing system changes thoroughly before moving them into production;
- analyzing service problems carefully to find and correct their root cause; and
- finding alternative ways of delivering information services during service disruptions. ∎

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GTA
Georgia Technology Authority

Specialized services contract helps agencies with technology projects

A new Specialized Consulting Services contract makes it easier and faster for state and local agencies to solicit proposals from contractors in five disciplines.

Agencies no longer need to conduct costly, time-consuming searches for qualified contractors when seeking assistance with technology projects in the areas of

- budgeting
- planning
- business process review and re-engineering
- independent verification and validation and
- project management.

In establishing the contract, GTA identified contractors interested in working with government agencies. Those who agreed to specific performance standards were placed on the contract's list of certified contractors, and agencies may impose additional requirements. There are a total of 126 contractor listings in all five disciplines, although some contractors are included in more than one discipline. The contract will be re-opened later this year to give other interested companies an opportunity to be added to the list.

When using the contract, agencies submit a statement of need to every contractor in the specific discipline for which they are seeking assistance.

This approach provides each certified contractor with an equal opportunity to compete for state business. If an agency believes its work requirements extend across more than one discipline, it must submit a statement of need to each certified contractor in all appropriate disciplines. Contractors are not required to respond to every statement of need.

Agencies using the contract also agree to provide GTA with an evaluation of the contractor's performance when work is completed. This information will enable GTA to ensure that contractors comply with the contract's performance requirements. ∎

On the Web at www.gta.georgia.gov, Procurement > Enterprise Contracts
- Specialized Consulting Services contract
- Guidelines for contract users, including a statement of need template and contractor performance report card
- Frequently Asked Questions

GTA closes the door on a computer threat

A new computer worm, known as the "Slammer," attacked thousands of computers and interfered with Internet connectivity worldwide in late January. Reported to be the fastest computer worm ever recorded, the Slammer worm compromised vulnerable computers, then randomly scanned and selected new targets on the Internet.

"...the state conducted its business without interruption. We were alerted early, and we responded early."

Quick action prevented disruption to the state's computer networks. The Slammer worm was first discovered in the U.S. around 1 a.m. on Saturday, January 25, and Internet Security Systems (ISS), the Georgia-based security firm that manages the state's firewalls, issued an alert. Those responsible for securing the state network took action to identify the threat in detail using intrusion detection systems such as ISS Real Secure. The attack was promptly blocked at the firewall.

GTA immediately notified the Information Security Officers (ISOs) in state agencies. The ISOs responded quickly and conducted a verification of the SQL servers in their agencies.

"Thanks to a coordinated effort between Internet Security Systems, GTA and the agency ISOs, we quickly closed the door on additional attacks, and the state conducted its business without interruption," said GTA's Bob Wynn, state chief information security officer. "We were alerted early, and we responded early."

Although the Slammer worm was not destructive, it did a great deal of harm around the world by spreading so aggressively and blocking networks. According to ISS, the worm affected global connectivity and brought down ATM networks, credit card sites, bill paying systems and 911 call centers. Mr. Wynn said some states suffered damage that took days to clean up.

"Fortunately, the Slammer worm was a non-event for Georgia," Mr. Wynn said. ∎

Achieving state's technology goals through collaboration

Georgia has ambitious technology-related goals, most of which have been established by the General Assembly in recent years, such as making it easier for citizens to access their government and promoting economic development through the availability of modern information technology (IT) services in every county.

No organization can accomplish such goals on its own, and GTA collaborates routinely with state agencies. Success also requires reaching beyond the boundaries of state government. It requires the coordinated efforts of public, private, education and business sectors, and GTA partners with each one in multiple ways.

"Collaboration is the key," said Sondra Rhoades-Johnson, who represents GTA in many collaborative efforts and leads GTA's Office of External Affairs and Business Development.

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"One of our jobs is to make people outside state government aware of Georgia's IT initiatives," she said. As an example, she cited the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement, which allows state and local government agencies to purchase Microsoft desktop software at a substantial discount. So far, 16 counties and eight cities in Georgia have taken advantage of the discount.

"The agreement is laying the foundation for future collaborative initiatives that wouldn't be possible if we didn't have people on the same platform," she continued.

Focusing on economic development, access to technology

Ms. Rhoades-Johnson is a member of the Technology Advisory Board of Georgia Tech's Economic Development Institute, which looks at ways technology can help businesses and communities grow.

Among other priorities, the advisory board focuses on the availability of modern IT services in rural areas. Some smaller communities have actually surpassed poor urban areas in their use of technology, she said.

- Delegations from countries as diverse as Bulgaria and Japan have visited LaGrange to learn about its efforts to create a "wired" community by offering Internet access to every household. A community of 26,000 residents located 65 miles southwest of Atlanta, LaGrange was named one of the top seven "intelligent" communities in the world by the World Teleport Association in 2001.
- The installation of a community-wide fiber optic system for high-speed Internet access was one of the factors leading to Newnan's selection as a 2001 City of Excellence by the Georgia Municipal Association. Newnan has a population of about 16,000 and is also located southwest of Atlanta.

Ms. Rhoades-Johnson also represents GTA on the board of the Georgia Electronic Commerce Association (GECA), a not-for-profit coalition of public and private sector organizations concerned with public policy affecting such issues as e-commerce and electronic records, signatures and transactions.

GTA is helping to coordinate a town hall meeting proposed by GECA for later this year. The meeting will bring together civic leaders, educators, business leaders, and state and local government officials to share ideas for addressing the "digital divide." The intent is for participants to identify ways they can work together to address the issues of technology access, education and economics as an opportunity for communities across Georgia, Ms. Rhoades-Johnson said.

Sondra Rhoades Johnson

"The projects that GECA works on oftentimes allow groups to develop relationships for long-term collaboration," she said.

Partnering for technology education

GTA also partners with educators to promote science and technology careers for middle school students. For the past two summers, Ms. Rhoades-Johnson has coordinated the CyberSisters Summer Web Camp, which gives girls an opportunity to learn about technology while working on a kids' Web site about Georgia. This year, GTA is sponsoring camps in Atlanta and Savannah. Joining GTA in Savannah are Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools, Savannah Technical College and Savannah College of Art and Design.

One of the challenges for this year's camp is redesigning the kids' page so it conforms with www.georgia.gov, the state's Web portal to state government. "They will follow all the steps and procedures as state agencies and ultimately Georgia's cities and counties," Ms. Rhoades-Johnson said. "We're working together to bring the best resources to the project." ∎

Quick thinking, cooperation required in IT emergency

An information security breach occurs in the state's networks. The situation rapidly escalates, and IT and management professionals must act decisively to protect the state's computer systems and restore security. Agency commissioners, IT directors, information security officers (ISOs), network administrators, legal counsel and information officers must work closely to assess the damage and determine the best solution as quickly as possible.

Fortunately, this security breach was not a real emergency, but part of a training exercise for newly appointed ISOs in Georgia state agencies. Participants played the roles and saw firsthand what is required in a security emergency.

More than 60 people from 37 state agencies attended the security "boot camp," which was developed and hosted by GTA. The three-day training covered security program development, enterprise security policy, response to cyber events and basic electronic evidence preservation. "Solving hypothetical security situations helps ISOs think through what they would do in a real emergency," said Bob Wynn, state chief ISO. "It helps us standardize our practices and encourage a coordinated approach, which will lead to better IT security throughout the state."

A session planned for this summer likely will focus on technical issues including firewalls and intrusion detection technologies. ▌

PMP/CAPM study groups to begin

State agency staff interested in earning certification as a project management professional (PMP) or a certified associate in project management (CAPM) are invited to participate in study groups facilitated by GTA's Office of Program Management. The CAPM is a new certification offered by the Project Management Institute (PMI) for less-experienced project managers.

The study groups will prepare participants to take a certification test administered by PMI. With over 86,000 members, PMI is the world's leading not-for-profit professional association for project-management professionals.

The groups are open to anyone involved in project and program management, and participation is free. The only charge is for study materials, which cost about $80. The study groups will be led by one of GTA's PMP-certified consultants. Groups will meet for 90 minutes once a week for 10 weeks. Locations will be determined based on enrollment and participants' convenience.

Study groups are scheduled to start the week of May 12. The GTA Office of Program Management is a Corporate Registered Education Provider.

For more information, e-mail
PMOMethodology@gta.ga.gov ▌

Partnering to boost project success

GTA's Office of Program Management is partnering with the Atlanta chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI) to pilot a corporate liaison program. Project managers in state government will be able to participate in educational programs and interact with their peers in other state agencies and the private sector. The pilot project aims to use enhanced professional development opportunities to promote the discipline of project management and improve project successes.

The corporate liaison program will sponsor several upcoming activities:

- **Downtown PMI-Atlanta Chapter meetings** on April 30, May 28 & June 25 at the Railroad Depot Blue Room, 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- **Project Management Symposium** on June 27 at the Capitol Education Center, 8 a.m. – noon.

For more information, e-mail
PMOMethodology@gta.ga.gov ▌